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### **Choosing a New Pet**

We all see a cute puppy or kitten and automatically want one. However, before acting on instinct and adopting a new pet for your home, think carefully about what you're getting into: a pet is a part of a family and requires attention, food, exercise and love.

Before adopting or buying a pet, follow these tips: they can help you choose the best pet for your situation and be better prepared when you bring him or her home.

### **Puppy or Kitten vs. Dog or Cat**

Puppies and kittens are cute and therefore a more popular choice than full-grown animals. However, baby animals require more from the owner: more time, patience and, possibly, money. An adult animal is more likely to be housebroken (barring a few accidents here and there), are less likely to chew or teeth furniture, and are more sedate, especially if they have been spayed or neutered. Make your decision based on the long term, as you hopefully will have your new pet for a period of time that exceeds the cute baby phase.

### **Keep Time in Mind**

If you travel frequently or work long hours, a dog may not be the best choice for you. Dogs need physical exercise and outdoor time; puppies need to go outside every four hours to relieve themselves. Other animals are better suited to being left alone: cats, fish, hamsters, gerbils, guinea pigs and reptiles are some examples. However, this doesn't mean you can leave your cat alone for days: all animals need daily care.

### **Patience Is a Virtue**

Certain pets are calmer than others. Whether your lifestyle is active and social or low key and peaceful, adopt a pet that fits your moods and lifestyle. Keep in mind that, regardless of how calm or active the animal appears to be, certain animals will require constant attention. Get to know your potential pet's personality as much as possible before bringing him or her home.

### **Kids and Pets**

A pet is a great way to teach children how to respect, love and care for others, not to mention that pets can be fun companions. However, some animals and breeds are better suited for children than others. Do some research as to which pets make the best companions for children.

### **Cost**

Pets are not always cheap. While some animals will require limited food and necessities, others will need toys, litter, leashes, special food and more. Contact a local shelter or veterinarian to determine the estimated cost of keeping a pet. Keep in mind that vet bills can add up; if you decide on a pet or breed that has a history of medical problems, you may want to invest in pet insurance.

### **Upheaval**

Sometimes people adopt or buy pets without thinking of significant factors. Before you bring home a pet, determine whether any family members have allergies to pets; whether your home is suited to having a pet or, if you rent, you are allowed to have one; and whether you plan to move somewhere in the near future where a pet may not be happy or welcome.

By planning ahead, you can choose a pet suited to your family's and the pet's wants and needs.

### **Once the Decision Is Made**

Once you decide on the type of animal that is right for you and your family, make sure you do the following:

- Get explicit directions on feeding, caring for, housing and handling your animal.
- Determine which shots (if any) the animal will need before taking him or her home.
- Determine the current state of the animal's health, as well as the exact medical history of your pet.
- Understand the diseases or maladies to which your type of pet is prone and any warning signs to watch out for.
- If the animal is not spayed or neutered already and you are not buying the animal for breeding purposes, make an appointment to have this done.
- Ask for the exact brand of food the animal was eating. You may want to request a sample of the food to take home to lessen the chance of an upset stomach.

- Get instructions on what you will need to do to pet-proof your home.

Purchase any necessities you will need to care for and house your new pet.

### **Additional Information and Counseling Resources**

**Call us for the support that you need. 1-888-290-4EAP (TDD: 1800-697-0353) or go to [www.GuidanceResources.com](http://www.GuidanceResources.com). Agency ID: FEDSOURCE**

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